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A MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Welcome to the last issue of ABSTRACT for 2005.

The past few months have been busy ones for the ABS ACT Regional Office, and we have been placing particular emphasis on reviewing our work program and strengthening our links with the Territory's Government. One result of this work has been a number of meetings between this office and key data users. I would like to thank all those involved again for giving up their time and being so supportive in their dealings with us, and creative in their suggestions for change.

I'd also like to express my hope that people will continue to take the time over the coming months to help us to refine our work program and discuss the ways in which we can improve the service we offer Canberra's Government and wider community.

As I said, the past few months have been busy. Some of the work that has been keeping us busy includes:

- We have already met with dozens of ACT Government employees to discuss plans around signing off the ABS-ACT Government's joint Information Development Plan. This work seems to be progressing well, and Terry Rawnsley from the ABS will be spending the next few months outposted to the Chief Minister's Department to work towards signing off the plan and begin its implementation. Victoria Allen, who is still based at our office here in Ainslie Avenue, is assisting him.
- We have received some extra funding from the Bureau's National Statistical Service project to provide the ACT Government with an ABS person dedicated to analysing

two or three administrative data sets over the next few months. That person – who will be given the grand title of “Administrative Data Champion” – will be appointed soon. She or he will work with the ACT Government to select an appropriate data set, undertake a short piece of analysis around the data and, in so doing, suggest ways in which the quality or user-friendliness of the data might be improved.

- Grazyna Majchzrak-Hamilton has recently joined this office to spend a few months reviewing all of our published output. She will be making recommendations about how we can deliver optimum value through the information we publish and her views will be very largely shaped by the discussions she is currently having with ACT public servants.
- We are beginning to think about increasing the quantity and variety of statistical training that the ABS offers the ACT public service. Please keep a look out for new courses over the next few months.
- In September we launched the 2005 edition of our flagship publication ACT In Focus, which provides a detailed overview of economic, social and environmental conditions in the ACT. We combined the launch with a cocktail party to celebrate 100 years of official statistics. Dennis Trewin (the Australian Statistician and ABS head), Senator Gary Humphries and Dr Clive Hamilton (head of the Australia Institute) all spoke at the event, which was well attended by members of the ACT Government and other prominent Canberrans. If you would like any more information about any of this work, or the wider work of the office then please do not hesitate to contact us on our new email address <act.office@abs.gov.au>. Finally, on a personal note, I'm sorry to say that I am leaving the ACT Regional Office, and Australia in October to spend two years working for the OECD in Paris. Although I have only been in the job for a short time, I have enjoyed it and I think I've learnt a good deal from my insights into the workings of a state government. My successor, Karen Vitullo, has had a distinguished career in information management at the ABS and I am sure she will be as keen as I am to ensure that all those Canberrans who need information for research, discussion and decision-making are well served by the ABS.

Jon Hall
ACT Regional Director
Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Changing Numbers in the ACT Office!

No, not statistical numbers but the ACT Office phone numbers. Due to advances in technology, the ACT Regional Office has been converted to the new Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) system, which runs telephone services (voice) across the ABS data network and now links this office with all other networked ABS offices. The conversion of the telephone systems to VoIP unfortunately means that we will no longer be on the ACT Government's InTACT phone system.

The VoIP system is similar to the new infrastructure that InTACT is implementing for many ACT Government departments; however, as the ACT Government and ABS networks are separate, new phone systems being applied by InTACT would not be compatible with the ABS phone systems, nor would InTACT have been able to convert this office to the ACT Government VoIP system. A number diversion system will be in place to allow for a transition period; however please note the new list of ACT Office contact numbers supplied on the back page of this issue of ABSTRACT for all your future calls to the ACT Regional Office.

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All ABS Publications Now Free on the Web!

All electronic publications in PDF and HTML format. Over 1,000 titles back to 1998; and

- Electronic tables in spreadsheet or data-cube format which contain publication tables. There is also a possibility the remaining ABS standard priced products could soon be free. This would include time series spreadsheets and data cubes. Subsequent to the ACT Regional Office bookshop closing, there will still be a counter service available to clients which will provide the following:
- Service all clients visiting the counter for ABS products and services
- A display of ABS flagship publications; and
- Advice to customers of alternative access channels such as the ABS Website, e-commerce facility, academic institutions, public libraries, AusStats, and the National Information Referral Service (NIRS). In addition, the ACT Regional Office will provide the following services:
- Offer a Reception Browser as an alternative access point to the ABS website and e-commerce for walk-in visitors; and
- For those customers who simply want to pursue specific publications, access to the ACT Regional Office reference library.

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ACT Office Centenary Celebrations

On Thursday 15 September, the ACT Regional Office of the ABS hosted a cocktail party to celebrate 100 years of statistics combined with the launch of their flagship publication ACT in Focus (cat. no. 1307.8). Over 70 people attended the party held at the Canberra Business Centre on Regatta Point, with the beautiful views and food adding a nice touch to the evening. The ACT Office used this celebration to include a reunion of all staff that had worked in the ACT Office over the past 15 years. The ACT Office was opened in October 1990 with one staff member, Dalma Jacobs, and currently employs 15 staff members. Back in 1990 the ACT Office was accommodated in the ACT Treasury. Australian Statistician Dennis Trewin, was the first to speak, putting emphasis on the importance of the ABS having Regional Offices and their relationships and roles with local government. Mr Trewin was pleased with the results of ACT in Focus, especially considering the small size of the Office. Senator Gary Humphries also spoke, speaking highly of ACT in Focus and its usefulness for policy making and legislation. Senator Humphries spoke about the high regard politicians in Federal and State/Territory governments have for the quality and trustworthiness of ABS data. Clive Hamilton was the last speaker, commanding everyone's attention with his stories of working at the ABS, and making comparisons between the ABS and the Australian Cricket team! From Mr Hamilton's experience whilst working in the ABS, he could personally comment on how well the ABS works as an organisation, and the worldwide reputation the ABS holds. There was a display of previously released ACT in Focus's dating back to when the publication first began in 1963 when it was called ACT Statistical Summary. There was also a video running of the History of the ABS, including the first Census teams and the technology used in the old days! Some of the statistics from the event are as follows:

- No. of guests - 75 (including 32 ABS Staff' and 43 Other Guests
- No. of local politicians - 6
- No. of guest speakers - 3
- Food eaten - 79 Herb and Rice Paper Rolls and 76 Tandoori Prawns No. of glasses of soft drink and orange juice consumed - 23. A fun night was had by all, with a bit of

ACT in Focus

The annual ABS publication Australian Capital Territory in Focus (cat. no. 1307.8), released on 15 September, is a valuable reference tool for people who want facts about the ACT at their fingertips. The publication provides a detailed statistical review of the social, demographic, environmental and economic characteristics of the ACT by drawing on a wide range of statistics compiled by the ABS and other organisations. ACT in Focus provides an analysis of important and interesting aspects of life in the ACT. It includes information on the environment, government, economy, people, education, labour market, business, housing, tourism, the Australian Capital Region and more.

Some of the highlights include:

- In 2003, over three-quarters of ACT couples lived together before marriage.
- At June 2004, the median age of the ACT was lower than for Australia.
- ACT residents had a higher participation rate in cultural and leisure activities than the national rate, for the 12 months to April 2004.
- Relatively more ACT residents had private health insurance than Australians generally, at December 2004.
- A record low number of fogs were recorded for the ACT in 2004.
- Within the Australian Capital Region, Eurobodalla had the highest proportion of its population on some type of income support, at June 2003.
- The Belconnen district had the highest number of first home owner grants during 2003–04.
- Taxes on property were the source of just over half of the ACT Government's taxation revenue in 2003–04.
- The ACT had the highest Australian per capita gross state product in 2003–04.

For more information or to order a copy of the publication please contact Victoria Allen on (02) 6252 8912 or <victoria.allen@abs.gov.au>

ACT Whole of Government Information Development Plan

During 2004–05 the ACT Regional Office of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in conjunction with the ACT Government produced a Whole of Government Information Development Plan (IDP). The IDP is designed to map policy, service provision and reporting needs to available statistical information and identify areas for improvement and gaps that might be filled. The IDP forms a significant component of the ACT Government's move to greater evidenced based

policy research. The ABS is now working with the ACT Government to finalise that document and begin implementing some of its proposals. The IDP is intended to be a dynamic document which outlines activities to be carried out over the next three years. Reviews and updates will be made annually. The first stages of IDP implementation have been started. We expect that the IDP's primary focus in the first year will be on making better use of existing administrative data held by the ACT Government. Although plans are still being developed, this might be achieved by carrying out a number of key activities, including:

- 1) Increasing the awareness of existing administrative data to users, both internally and externally to the departments that hold it. This includes having metadata available to

describe and understand the data.

2) Increasing the understanding of the quality of existing administrative data held by the various ACT Government departments.

3) Implementing standards to improve comparability between data collected by different departments.

4) Improving access to statistical information derived from such administrative data.

The ABS will also give greater attention to increasing the research and analytical skills amongst ACT Government staff. This will be achieved via a beefed-up training program together with other initiatives which will help public servants in the Territory to better understand and analyse existing administrative data. This work will, of course, be combined with ongoing work by the ABS to improve existing ABS statistics for the ACT.

For more information, contact Terry Rawnsley on (02) 6252 8902 or email <terry.rawnsley@abs.gov.au>

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ABS Small Area Estimation Manual

Users of ABS data often require estimates for small geographic levels below the state level, where survey sample sizes are quite low or even zero. This is particularly an issue for the ACT and NT, where even territory level estimates often suffer from considerably higher sampling error than those for the larger states. In response to the increasing user demand for small area estimates, together with practical difficulties in increasing survey sample sizes, the ABS has been evaluating statistical methods for producing small area estimates and determining their quality. As part of this evaluation an empirical study of small area estimates of disability is being undertaken using the Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers. The culmination of this work will be the Small Area Estimation Practice Manual, which will assist in standardising the ABS' response to small area data requests both in terms of appropriateness to users' decision making requirements and quality of output. The manual will be mainly aimed at small area practitioners within the ABS engaged in providing ABS clients with small area data. However it is also likely to have appeal and relevance to clients of the ABS interested in the processes and methods for producing and validating small area data. A working draft of the first edition of the manual will be available in October 2005. Comments will be actively sought from users of the manual, both within and outside the ABS, on improvements to the manual and how to better tailor the manual to their needs.

For more information, contact Daniel Elazar on (02) 6252 6962 or email <daniel.elazar@abs.gov.au>

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Australian Social Trends Seminar

Australian Social Trends (cat. no. 4102.0) has been designed to provide all Australians with an easily understandable compendium of articles about topical social issues. The publication has a strong national focus, but it also includes state data about many current social issues. The ACT Australian Social Trends seminar will be held on Friday 25 November at 9:30 am at the Waldorf on London Circuit at a cost of \$80pp. The seminar is designed to give you an overview of Australian society and how it is changing over time. It will highlight trends in many areas of social concern, such as Population, Family and community, Health, Education and training, Work, Economic resources and Housing. The seminar will last about one hour with additional time for questions and discussion. Handouts will be

available and morning tea will be provided.

The Presenters:

Joanne Hillermann is Director of the Social Analysis and Reporting Section at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Joanne has worked in the ABS for 20 years in a range of subject areas across the Population Statistics Group including Family and Community, Living Conditions and Labour Market Statistics. Most recently as Director of Family and Community Statistics, Joanne was responsible for the development and publication of the ABS Social Capital Framework and the development of a disability measure for the 2006 Census. Kate Bond is an Assistant Director in the Social Analysis and Reporting Section and an editor of Australian Social Trends. During her 10 years in the ABS, Kate has worked on a wide variety of social surveys. These include the National Nutrition Survey, the Child Care Survey and a large number of labour force supplementary surveys such as Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership.

To obtain a registration form, please contact Victoria Allen on 6252 8912 or <victoria.allen@abs.gov.au>.

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2006 Census Products - Your views count, but time is running out

Following on from consultations held late last year about the proposed strategy for 2006 Census output, the ABS has developed a suite of proposed Census products and services. To ensure that the products and services produced from the 2006 Census are best suited to the needs of our users, we need your help.

The proposed products and services are outlined in the recently released information paper Census of Population and Housing – Proposed products and services (cat. no. 2011.0). You can contribute your views, comments and ideas regarding the proposed products and services outlined in the paper through an accompanying questionnaire. However, submissions close on Friday 11 November, so time is fast running out to have your say. The information paper and questionnaire are available online at <www.abs.gov.au/census>. If you have not yet filled in the questionnaire, we encourage you to do so. The user consultation process plays a significant role in the 2006 Census program and the ABS greatly appreciates the feedback users are able to contribute.

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Statistical Training

The ACT Regional Office is considering running a number of Statistical Courses in the first half of 2006. A number of these courses are new to external clients and will be aimed at both government and private sector clients. We are looking for expressions of interest from our clients to find out the demand for the courses outlined below.

Basic Statistical Analysis (2 days)

This program introduces participants to statistical analysis, it aims to teach participants to:

- Calculate measures of central tendency and spread
- Produce frequency histograms
- Interpret possible relationships between variables
- Calculate weighted estimates
- Calculate Relative Standard Errors
- Calculate Confidence Intervals
- Test for statistically significant differences between estimates.

TAPAS (2 days)

The Thinking Analytically, Problem-solving and Story-telling (TAPAS) Program aims to enhance the capabilities of participants by equipping them with a tool kit of strategies and techniques for effectively analysing data and linking the story the data tells back to the question posed. The focus of TAPAS is to determine 'what is the story to tell' by thinking analytically (or critically) about the information contained in specific datasets and/or identify (and solve) errors in the datasets. At the completion of the Program, participants will be able to:

- Understand the term 'analytical thinking'
- Identify the three broad elements of analytical thinking
- Apply analytical thinking to formulating and describing the topic, issue, or problem to be solved
- Understand your role and responsibilities in quality assuring a dataset
- Look at a number (or data) in context
- Use a systematic process for building an expectation of the data
- Identify whether the data is correct
- Prepare solutions for addressing the problems
- Explain the factors that can affect quality and reliability of data
- Understand that there are different ways to view data depending on the analytical need
- Identify and apply correct analytical techniques
- Draw conclusions to inform the debate around your topic or issue.

Understanding Demographic Data (1 day)

This course aims to help participants better understand demographic trends and better utilise demographic data. The seminar provides awareness of demographic data produced by the ABS and gives an introduction to demographic techniques which enable comparisons of demographic data between regions and over time. Key issues to be covered during the seminar include:

- Relationship of Population Census counts to Estimated Resident Population data
- Components of population growth, births, deaths and internal and overseas migration
- Changing demographic trends
- How the ABS produces projections and population estimates
- Tools for demographic analysis, with practical exercises
- Population dynamics, e.g. ageing and the effect of migration on Australia's population profile.

Labour Statistics (1 day)

This course explores the data produced by both household and employer based collections, and highlights the range of products available to access labour-related data. The sessions included in the training seminar are:

- Overview of ABS labour collections
- Labour supply and labour demand
- Measures of underutilised labour
- Labour market dynamics
- Describing employment conditions
- Information about population groups (includes regions and Indigenous persons)
- Earnings and labour costs

- Industrial relations
- A guide to ABS data sources (includes publications, spreadsheets, datacubes, standard errors, original/trend and seasonally adjusted).

Making Quality Informed Decisions (1 day)

This course aims to educate participants in the use of the data quality framework when making decisions based on statistics.

Key issues to be covered during the seminar include:

- Identification and description of the six aspects of data quality
- Clarification of data needs using the data quality frameworks
- Ability to evaluate datasets in the context of the data need
- Use results of data evaluation to apply risk management principles and make informed decisions.

If you are interested in any of the above courses, or would like to be on the invite list for future courses, please contact Victoria Allen on (02) 6252 8912 or <victoria.allen@abs.gov.au>.

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<h2>Expected Major Annual & Irregular Releases</h2>
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GENERAL

1301.0 Year Book Australia, 2006 (January)
 1309.0 Australia at a Glance, 2006 (January)
 1266.0 Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups, 2005–06 (December)
 1329.0 Australian Wine and Grape Industry, 2005 (January)
 1329.0.55.002 Vineyards Estimates, Australia, 2004–05 (December)

CENSUS

2008.0 2006 Census of Population and Housing: Nature and Content (November)
 2903.0 How Australia Takes a Census, 2006 (November)

DEMOGRAPHY

3201.0 Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories, June 2005 (December)
 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia and New Zealand, 2004–05 (February)
 3307.0.55.001 Divorces, Australia, 2004 (November)
 3301.0 Births, Australia, 2004 (November)
 3302.0 Deaths, Australia, 2004 (December)
 3303.0 Causes of Deaths, Australia, 2004 (December)
 3306.0.55.001 Marriages, Australia, 2004 (October)
 3309.0.55.001 Suicides: Recent Trends, Australia, 1994 to 2004 (December)
 3222.0 Population Projections, Australia, 2004 to 2101 (November)

SOCIAL STATISTICS

4130.0.55.01 Housing Occupancy and Costs, Australia, 2003–04 (November)
 4221.0 Schools, Australia, 2005 (February)

4363.0.55.002 National Health Survey 2001: Data Reference Package, 2004–05 (January)
4364.0 National Health Survey: Summary of Results, 2004-05 (February)
4513.0 Criminal Courts, Australia, 2004–05 (January)
4517.0 Prisoners in Australia, 2005 (December)
4602.0 Environmental Issues: People's Views and Practices, March 2005 (November)
4619.0 Experimental Estimates of Regional Agricultural Water Use, Research Paper, 2010 (December)
4715.0 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, 2004–05 (February)
4911.0 Measures of Community Connection, Australia, 2005 (December)

NATIONAL ACCOUNTS, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND FINANCE

5220.0 Australian National accounts: State Accounts, 2004–05 (November)

LABOUR STATISTICS AND PRICES

6222.0 Job Search Experience, Australia, July 2005 (January)
6227.0 Education and Work, Australia, May 2005 (December)
6238.0 Retirement and Retirement Intentions, Australia, Aug 2004 to Jun 2005 (December)
6239.0 Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia, Aug 2004 to Jun 2005 (December)
6429.0 Producer and International Trade Price Indexes: Concepts, Sources and Methods, 2005 (November)

AGRICULTURE

7501.0 Value of Principal Agricultural Commodities Produced, Australia, 2004–05 (January)

SECONDARY INDUSTRY AND DISTRIBUTION

8155.0 Australian Industry, 2003–04 (December)
8221.0 Manufacturing Industry, Australia, 2003–04 (December)
8226.0 Electricity, Gas, Water and Sewerage Operations, Australia, 2003–04 (November)
8155.0.55.002 Australian Industry: Summary of Industry Performance, Australia, Data Report, 2003–04 (December)

MINING

8415.0 Mining Operations, Australia, 2003–04 (November)

TRANSPORT

9208.0.55.001 Survey of Motor Vehicle Use Fitness for Purpose Review: Information Paper, 2005 (November)
9309.0 Motor Vehicle Census, Australia, 31 March 2005 (November)

This listing shows a selection of ABS publications expected to be released over the coming quarter. The expected month of release is shown in brackets. Release dates may vary from those shown. Current publications and other products released by the ABS are listed in the Catalogue of Publications and Products (cat. no. 1101.0) which is available from any ABS office or the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>. The web site also provides daily release information.

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Entry Points to the ABS ACT Office

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BELCONNEN ACT 2616

CPI INFORMATION LINE 1902 981 074 (75c per minute)

WEB SITE: <www.abs.gov.au>

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Telephone 1300 135 070
Fax 1300 135 211
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About this release

ABStract - Statistical News: Australian Capital Territory provides new and relevant information about survey developments, information and training sessions, user consultations, major changes to the statistical program, state/territory data releases and significant ABS data releases.

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